United Nations A/58/310

General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 August 2003

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session
Item 85 of the provisional agenda*
Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 57/124 of 11 December 2002, the operative part of which reads as follows:

> "*The General Assembly*,
>
> ...
>
> 1. *Commends* the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories for its efforts in performing the tasks assigned to it by the General Assembly and for its impartiality;
>
> 2. *Reiterates its demand* that Israel, the occupying Power, cooperate with the Special Committee in implementing its mandate;
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> 3. *Deplores* those policies and practices of Israel which violate the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories, as reflected in the reports of the Special Committee covering the reporting period;
>
> 4. *Expresses grave concern* about the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of Israeli practices and measures, and especially condemns the excessive and indiscriminate use of force since 28 September 2000, which has resulted in almost two thousand Palestinian deaths and tens of thousands of injuries;

* A/58/150.

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5. *Requests* the Special Committee, pending complete termination of the Israeli occupation, to continue to investigate Israeli policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, especially Israeli violations of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949[1] and to consult, as appropriate, with the International Committee of the Red Cross according to its regulations in order to ensure that the welfare and human rights of the peoples of the occupied territories are safeguarded and to report to the Secretary-General as soon as possible and whenever the need arises thereafter;

6. *Also requests* the Special Committee to submit regularly to the Secretary-General periodic reports on the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

7. *Further requests* the Special Committee to continue to investigate the treatment of prisoners and detainees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967;

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General:

(*a*) To provide the Special Committee with all necessary facilities, including those required for its visits to the occupied territories, so that it may investigate Israeli policies and practices referred to in the present resolution;

(*b*) To continue to make available such additional staff as may be necessary to assist the Special Committee in the performance of its tasks;

(*c*) To circulate regularly to Member States the periodic reports mentioned in paragraph 6 above;

(*d*) To ensure the widest circulation of the reports of the Special Committee and of information regarding its activities and findings, by all means available, through the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat and, where necessary, to reprint those reports of the Special Committee that are no longer available;

(*e*) To report to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session on the tasks entrusted to him in the present resolution;

9. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-eighth session the item entitled 'Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories'."

2. All necessary facilities were provided to the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. Arrangements were made for the Special Committee to meet in Geneva from 10 to 12 June 2003 and to have exchanges of views with relevant representatives of permanent missions, of United Nations agencies and such institutions as the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as with representatives of a number of international non-governmental

[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

organizations. In addition, the Special Committee carried out a field mission to Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic from 13 to 24 June 2003. Due to the restrictions imposed on the elaboration of reports to the General Assembly, the Special Committee gave up the submitting of periodic reports during the period under review.

3. Pursuant to paragraph 8 (d) of resolution 57/124, the activities described below were undertaken.

Department of Public Information

4. Throughout the reporting period, the Department disseminated information on the activities of the Special Committee, including documents, press releases and relevant reports on the work carried out by the Special Committee and the Commission on Human Rights, and through contacts with journalists, with the assistance of the United Nations information centres and services and other United Nations offices worldwide.

5. The revised and updated publication of the Department of Public Information, entitled *The Question of Palestine and the United Nations* (DPI/2276), includes extensive references to the reports of the Special Committee, including sections dealing with questions of human rights, settlements and refugees. The booklet was printed in March 2003 in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian, and was widely disseminated to all United Nations offices in the field.

6. Electronic copies of the reports of the Special Committee were made available to the public by the Department's Public Inquiries Section upon request and to the delegations of Member States by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. Information about the Special Committee is contained on the Human Rights web site at www.un.org/rights, which is directly accessible from the main pages of the United Nations web site (www.un.org) and is updated and maintained by the Department in most of the official languages. In addition, a number of web sites of the network of United Nations information centres and services contain information on the work of the Special Committee.

United Nations information centres and services

7. The United Nations Information Service at the United Nations Office at Geneva bears a special responsibility for promoting human rights, given its close proximity to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and consequent involvement in the work of the Office, the Commission on Human Rights, the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and the majority of the sessions of the six human rights treaty bodies meeting in Geneva. The Geneva Service's activities to promote the work of the Special Committee included press releases issued by the Press Section on the agenda and visits of the Special Committee to Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic in June 2003. The Geneva Service also undertook a wide variety of activities aimed at journalists as well as the general public, to keep them informed on the question of Palestine.

8. The United Nations information centre in Cairo provided support to the Special Committee during its mission to the region. Among other activities, the centre's Director facilitated wide media coverage of the work of the Committee, and in particular, to its meetings in the region. As a result of the Cairo centre's media

outreach, there was extensive coverage of the Special Committee's visit and activities in Egypt.

9. Among the activities undertaken by UNIC Cairo were four TV interviews by the centre's Director with MBC-Channel (Dubai), Nile TV International (Egypt), Al-Arabia Satellite Channel (Dubai) and Nile News (Egypt), highlighting the role of the Special Committee; a live interview by the Director with "Sabah Gadeed" programme (New Day), for Nile TV International, during which he emphasized the mandate of the Special Committee and highlighted the role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in improving the situation of the Palestinian people; and two interviews with the Chairman of the Special Committee after his meetings with the Secretary-General of the Arab League and with the Egyptian Foreign Minister, as well as an exclusive live interview with Al-Arabia Satellite Channel (Dubai).

10. The Cairo centre also organized a press conference by the Special Committee, to which all Egyptian and Arab newspaper correspondents, as well as television channels, were invited, and distributed the latest report of the Special Committee submitted to the General Assembly (September 2002). In addition, UNIC Cairo translated the press release on the field mission of the Special Committee into Arabic and disseminated it to major Egyptian and Saudi newspapers based in Cairo as well as news agencies.

11. It should also be noted that on 10 June 2003, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to all Member States drawing attention to General Assembly resolutions 57/124, 57/125, 57/126, 57/127 and 57/128. The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations Office at Geneva responded in a note verbale dated 23 July 2003 to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which is attached as an annex to the present report.

Annex

Note verbale dated 23 July 2003 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and with reference to the note of the Secretary-General of the United Nations concerning General Assembly resolutions 57/124, 57/125, 57/126, 57/127 and 57/128 has the honour to transmit herewith the following comments.

Poland invariably lends its support to a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict, as well as to the security and development prospects for all the countries of the region.

By voting at the General Assembly, we favoured the application of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem and other occupied Arab territories. We do not recognize any decisions or actions on the part of the Israeli Government that go beyond the boundaries of international law and alter the status of the above-mentioned areas, including the Golan Heights. While recognizing Israel's right to defend its people, we call on the Israeli Government to abide by the rules of the Geneva Convention and humanitarian law in the ongoing conflict. At the same time, we call on the Palestinian authorities to put an end to all acts of terror.